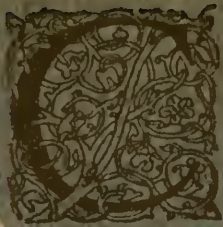


3513
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1911



ITY VIEWS

AND
VISIONS



William Griffith



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CITY VIEWS

AND VISIONS

By William Griffith

11



New York
Moffat, Yard & Company
1911

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1911

To
My Wife

ARGUMENT

Critic. Someone has mentioned your attempt to modernize a form of dialogue once popular as a manner of dramatic expression. Is the idea original?

Author. Others since Virgil and Spenser have used the same vehicle successfully.

Critic. It is something of a novelty?

Author. Fairly so; at least with respect to the American application.

Critic. While you have used the form of verse, do you think rhyme in dialogue is natural?

Author. It may be musical.

Critic. One might say that you were trying to realise the poetry of new-world life?

Author. Only in so far as others may realise the same thoughts and emotions. *Brown* personifies an immature mind overshadowed by fatalism. It is not an extraordinary obsession, though the character has many necessary limitations. *Gray* has something of the philosopher about him, and *Green* is simply a happy medium. They voice only vague murmurs and echoes that have come by intermittently: voices from invisible verandahs: hints and aspirations and memories and emotions of pulses that beat and have probably beaten forever through the world.

Critic. How odd—the names!

Author. I had thought them obvious.

Critic. The fatalism you have spoken of is abstract, so far as you have gone. A play would seem more ample for the development of the idea.

Author. Why attempt the impossible?

Critic. Impossible?

Author. Well, say—a readable play?

Critic. Ah! I understand.

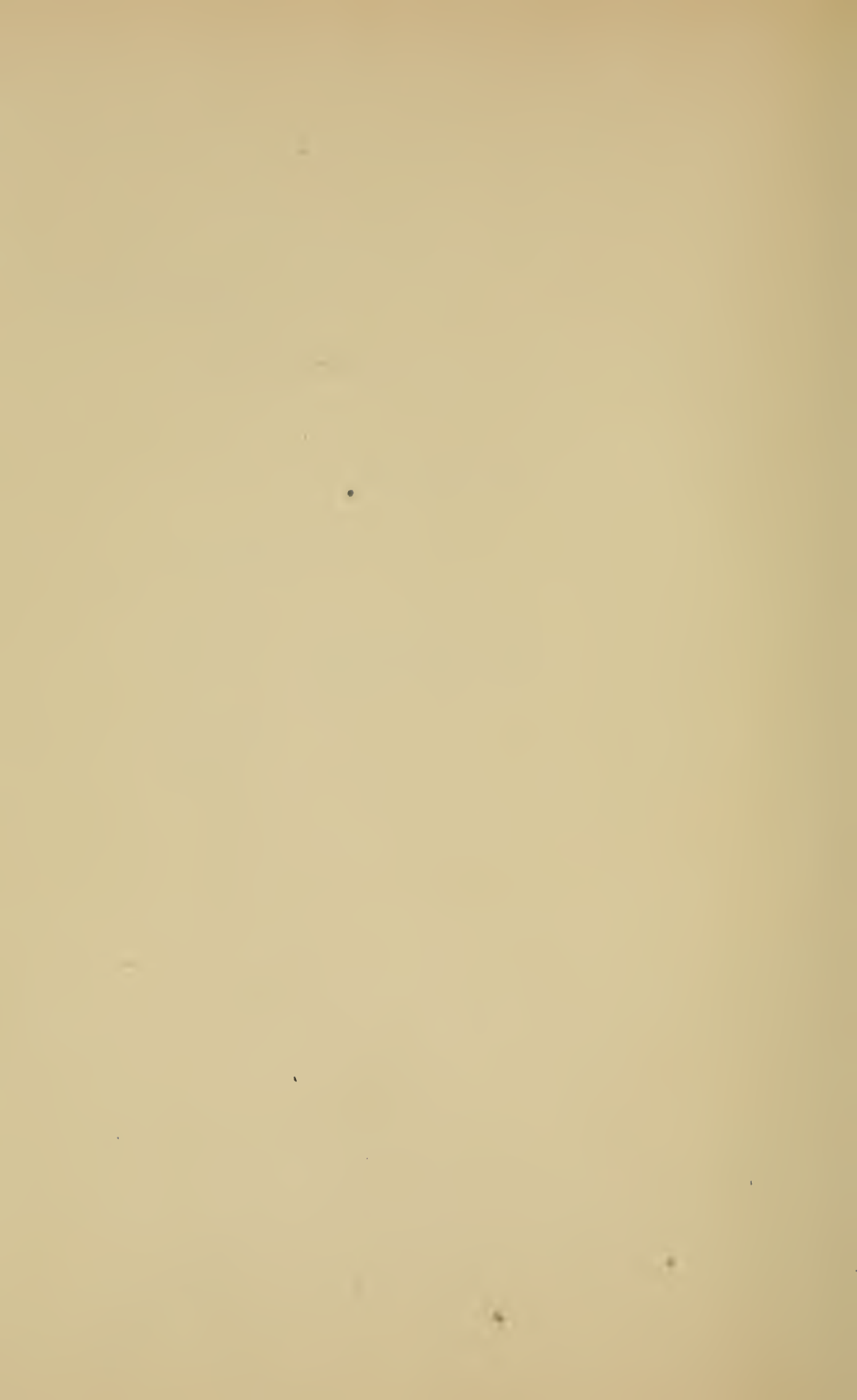
Author. Yes?

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SPRING

SCENE: New York.
TIME: The Present.



SPRING

Brown.

Gray.

Green.

BROWN *at a table is reading a daily paper. GRAY has just entered the room, and is seated near a window. A number of newspapers and periodicals cover the table. Above a confused murmur of voices from the outside echoes the commerce of the avenue.*

Brown.

To-day, the same as yesterday,
The sun goes toiling west.

Gray.

Another joyous roundelay
Awakens nest by nest.

Once more the green Aprilian woods
Are brimming with the spring.

Brown.

And now the wilding mary-buds
Are shyly opening.

But never bud nor bloom nor bird,
Nor sylvan serenade,
Have we on Broadway seen or heard
Above the din of trade.

By day and night the sounding town
Is drumming a refrain
Of riches and of rich renown,
Of gayety and gain,

Of human life becoming cheap,
And means of living dear,
Until—if one could only sleep
Beyond a waking here!

Gray.

Of course desires and pleasures are
Enhanced by death.

Brown.

The stress
Of living seems to grow.

Gray.

We mar
Our health and happiness,
In our own souls and bodies, by
Imagining the worst
Precedes the best.

Brown.

Mere martyrs!

Gray.

Why
Be known among the first?

Brown.

Oblivion is failure still.

Gray.

Success is understood
By only those who have the will
To please the multitude.

Brown.

Success is something more and more
Impossible to gauge,
Amid the heavy iron roar
And thunder of the age.

My soul has no dynamic force,
Nor energy divine,
To follow any other course
Than happens to be mine.

And whatsoever may befall
Is profitless and stale:
My youth has been a prodigal
At every bargain sale.

I hear the clamor of the town,
As something that pursues
A fugitive to drag him down,
And put him in the news.

Anon a trumpet warning peals
And challenges the fears
That rush and rally at my heels,
And gather with the years.

On my despairing gaze the sun
Of Arcady and Ind
Appears like innocence when one
Defiantly has sinned.

Gray.

The imagery is as dim
As innocence to me,
Upon my word!

Brown.

A passing whim,
To jest at misery.

Nor may you ever understand
My ghost of haunting woe,
When, like a trinket in my hand,
The earth swings far below.

As if by sorcery, the moon
Arises from her bowers
And slips her shawl—on lilies soon
To stray among her flowers.

Gray.

Good—lack!

Brown.

The heavy sable shade
Is yonder backward drawn;
Behold her walking like a maid,
Far on the starry lawn
In blossom!

Gray.

Dian is abroad
Without a chaperone!

Brown.

No, no!

Gray.

Betray and then defraud
Yourself—and live alone:

For you must answer, ill or well.
For all you do and see.

Brown.

With eyes that dwell, as one in hell,
On far felicity,

I still review the simple ways
Of happy, hallowed years.
Of late the sun has led my days
In very sordid spheres.

By night a coil of avenues,
Around a thousand eyes,
Is writhing where the city views
Inviolable skies

Adorned and jeweled with the stars.
Beneath them, waging stark
Rebellion, many a toiler wars
With hunger in the dark.

Blaspheming and beyond the pale
Are ghoulish shapes that greet,
On every hand, the wan and frail
Drab women of the street.

By day the sore and feeble stray
Amid the sights that breed
In lanes and avenues—the prey
Of every crouching need.

Once—once when, raving in his cell
At some derisive nod,
They said the convict prayed to hell,
I almost doubted God!

Gray.

Divinity has been denied
By many a brooding mind;
And looking on the darkest side,
Drives men and women blind.

Though life and love are bought and sold,
Remember that the trees
Forever mantle as of old
With green embroideries.

Hearing the *matins* and the *lauds*
Of heaven chime and ring,
The sun still rises and applauds
The jocund shout of spring.

Brown.

On Broadway, by a happy chance,
My eyes have freshly seen
The soul of April and Romance,
Not far from Bowling Green.

And something came down from the skies
Distilling fresh delight,
As though a rose in human guise
Had blossomed on my sight.

Another once familiar face
And presence suddenly
Were summoned evermore to grace
A fading memory.

And like a song that has been sung,
Or story that is told,
My aching thoughts have been among
The happy days of old.

Singing heard without.

SONG

*They have asked me why the flowers,
Lady mine,
Cast a shadow on the hours,
As they pine.
Surely they know not the room
In dream-chambers where the gloom
May be sweetened by a bloom,
Lady mine!*

*If I plucked the stars for roses,
Lady mine,
And told all that day discloses,
As the shine
Of the sunlight strikes the shade
Round the golden petals laid
On your bosom, they would fade,
Lady mine.*

*But if I could run a brook,
Lady mine,
That with chatters through each nook
Would entwine,
In its ebb and surge and flow,
All the roses, do you know
What the breeze would whisper low,
Lady mine?*

Gray.

Daphnis is hoarsely hindering
The music of the spheres,
Rehearsing something he can sing
To Chloe.

Brown.

He appears.

Enter Green still singing.

*Ah! the falling years grow heavy,
Lady mine.
Though the blossoms in your bevy
Still are fine,
Do you know what Time will do
To the roses plucked for you,
When the sun has left no dew,
Lady mine?*

Gray.

Aha! with Cupid from the woods.
The king-cups you have seen
Approach and doff their little hoods
Before the Fairy Queen.

Brown.

A gross anachronism! Bow
Them out of doors!

Green.

I seem
To see the fairies even now,
As in a boyish dream:

Away down in a wooded dell,
Still trooping through the shade,
Step by step to an elfin bell,
A gorgeous cavalcade.

Anon the warriors gather round
With leafy lances bent;
The beetle, with his bugle wound,
Proclaims the tournament.

And dimly, as the airy sprites
Upraise a muffled cheer,
The firefly in the grasses lights
His swinging chandelier.

Gray.

Since when have you returned
From where the twilight veils
Arcadia?

Brown.

And only learned
To label fairy tales

Of revelry?

Green.

A starry fay,
With heaven listening
Out on the hills, taught me to-day
A song the thrushes sing.

*Something bids the Forest hush;
Little pinions softly whirl;
Hardly in the underbrush
Does a leaf or shadow stir.*

*Is it playing just in fun
Or in tears the Forest grieves,
Ere the happy morning sun
Glances in among the leaves?*

*O to hear a happy voice,
Just the angel of the rain
Bidding earth and sky rejoice?
Sing on—sing that song again!*

Gray.

What?

Brown.

On the hills?

Green.

Yes; let me think.

Gray.

Oh, never think to pin
The angels down! But up and drink
A health to spring!

Brown.

Begin.

Gray.

Of seasons there are many more,
But in the race we run,
Does anybody win before
The setting of the sun?
A stout heart is the merry heart
Upon a fading trail;
So ho! here in the busy mart,
I sing the humming ale.

CHORUS.

We sing the humming ale, good friend!
But here's a health to you,
With one more when the race shall end,
To show the prize we drew.
Heigh-ho! the bowl, from brim to brim,
Lies full. Fill a cup.
While now the rosy apples swim,
All hail! Drink it up.

Green.

The siren city offers some
Felicity, but oh!
Once more at leisure let me roam
Where summer breezes blow!
Once more the sturdy roving foot;
Then with an ample load
Of gay hopes and an easy boot,
I sing the open road.

CHORUS.

We sing the open road, good friend!
But here's a health to you,
With one more to the nappy blend
Of Saxon in the brew.
Heigh-ho! the bowl, from brim to brim,
Lies full. Fill a cup.
While now the rosy apples swim,
All hail! Drink it up.

Brown.

The clamor of the town may sleep
A thousand years, and still
Dreams in a thousand hearts shall leap
Under the urging will.
The north may blight the winds that bless ;
The gypsy child may rove ;
But still, for hope and happiness,
I sing the song of love.

CHORUS.

We sing the song of love, good friend !
But here's a health to you,
With one more to the hopes that send
The parting moments through.
Heigh-ho ! the bowl, from brim to brim,
Lies full. Fill a cup.
While now the rosy apples swim,
All hail ! Drink it up.

SUMMER

SUMMER

Persons—The Same

The room is lighted by hanging lamps in the center. A mazer bowl is on the table. The moon shines through an eastern window.

Green.

A clear soprano, filled with sun,
The wood-thrush weaves his wedding song.

Gray.

Once more blithe summer voices throng.

Green.

Once more the gossip waters run.

Gray.

Marsh-marigolds, bright flowers of hope,
Are twinkling over fens and lakes.

Green.

Upon a thousand gardens breaks
A thunder-shower of heliotrope.

Gray.

And daisy-blossoms fringe the lanes.

Green.

And where the drowsy primrose dreams
The livelong day, the woodland streams
Are brimming with the summer rains.

Gray.

The robin beats his golden gong
With rapture, leading many a band
Of woodland minstrels.

Green.

Down the land,
Come merle and mavis borne along.

Gray.

They say a bird on every tree
Is busy with a song.

Brown.

They say
A million human voices pray
Upon a second Calvary.

A distant sound of weary feet
Arises dimly to my ears,
As though a fountain-head of tears
Were playing yonder in the street.

Green.

The owl molests the solemn chime
In many a belfry far away.

Brown.

A flash of faces, wan and gray
With hunger, haunts our happy time.

Green.

While happy alto voices ring.

Brown.

All day the restless millions rush.

Green.

About this hour a conscious hush
Is shattered where the linnets sing.

Gray.

A conscious hush?

Green.

As real and dear
As loves and happy lovers are,
Unseen companions are as far
Removed as heaven and as near.

Brown.

So far may fancy, rather, stray.

Green.

No, no!

Brown.

Then, comrade, let us see
Another summer memory,
With meadows waving far away.

Gray.

Turn down the lamps!

Green.

Wait!

Brown.

Turn them out
Completely!

Green.

You may fail to see.

Gray.

Dive deep. We promise secrecy.

Brown.

Begin while silence soothes the doubt.

Green.

Softly the wandering breezes pass
And whisper something through the years,
Disclosing all the green frontiers,
As in a magic looking-glass.

Afar the blue horizon fills
And mantles with a rosy foam:
And now the herds are winding home,
As evening gathers on the hills.

A distant ridge ; with shaded eyes,
I stand and gaze : and over all
The hills and dales a human call
Arises clear and dwells and dies :

Arises with an echo so
Melodious and thin and lone,
The thrushes launch a trembling tone
On waves of music sobbing low.

And over hill and over dale,
As darkness settles on the land,
Softly the moon, with cloudy hand,
Puts on her lace and silver veil.

Then dying, dying out again,
The sobbing billows faintly break
On phantom shores : the zephyrs shake,
And darkness overruns the plain.

Brown.

An overworn and faded theme.

Green.

I hear the quails and thrushes sing,
In coveys blithely twittering.

Brown.

I hear the demon whistles scream

A hoarse reminder.

Gray.

O to see
A blue-bird singing in the street!

Green.

Extremes, wide-circling, often meet;
And discord strengthens harmony.

So never mope nor ever dwell
On direful woes and ancient wrongs,
As maddening as the maddest songs
Of cap and bell.

Brown.

Beneath the spell
Of ambushed meanings that dismay
My wondering soul, above me leer
Devouring eyes—as those of fear.

Gray.

Unleash the dogs and come away!

A danger, wooed in wilfulness,
Caps vanity.

Green.

Which, capped, avoid.
Decisive moments, unemployed,
Are swift forerunners of distress.

Brown.

Who can avoid the human pang
That stabs a spirit at the Throne,
When many hear the doom of one
Who dreamt his foolish dreams and sang?

Green.

Or wise or foolish, let us cross
No bridges ere we come to them.

Gray.

For evermore the rarest gem
Is hidden where the tempests toss.

So now, another round of ale,
And someone sound a sylvan note.

Green.

As once in outland ways remote
Was heard the whistle of the quail
Across the lonely miles and far
Away where earth and heaven meet
On hallowed ground, in dear and sweet
Communion with the evening star.

Brown.

There are no longer any dews
In mist or rain, nor any bell
To toll me nearer home and quell
The thunder of the avenues.

Green.

Away from city and from town
New hopes may blossom and unfold.

Brown.

Aspire and dream and feel the old
Enthusiasm dying down!

Green.

If duty has been reckoned least,
A song is nobler never sung.

Gray.

Of course—and rosaries are strung
For penitents as well as priest.

Green.

Well said!

Brown.

Albeit feeble speech
May touch the story clumsily,
Some haunting Presence follows me,
Prodigious in its subtle reach.

I gaze from heaven, from the gate,
Adown our vasty starlit hall,
Wherein the nations rise and fall
Like shadows, at the whim of fate.

A moment near, a moment gone,
And sounding on the iron skies,
A Voice of thunder dwells and dies:
And still the world moves on and on.

Crowding the distant starry road,
With banners fading one by one,
The review passes and—alone,
I dream the solitude of God.

Green.
Unreal reality.

Gray.
Ah—yes!
The paradox may have a phase
Of truth; but come, a health—to raise
This siege of growing moodiness!

Green.
A health around!

Gray.
One more—and then,
Good-night.

Green.
You leave?

Gray.
My holiday.

Green.
And whither?

Gray.

England.

Green.

What? Hooray
For Merrie England once again!

Gray.

For all the English flags unfurled
Beneath the sun!

Brown.

And why not our
Republic mighty with the power
To mold the future of the world
With hands as strong and sure as fate?
The emblem of the flag we fly
Is peace, to station manhood high,
Or war, to make a nation great.

Gray.

The world is watching, from afar,
An empire, born of its distress,
Awakening to consciousness.

Green.

The glory of our rising star
Shall never wane.

Gray.

The sword and pen
We wield as when our fathers saw
The dawn of universal law,
In England among Englishmen.

Brown.

. I think of Ireland held in thrall.

Gray.

I think that I have somewhere heard
Of freedom as an Irish word,
Revered among us most of all.

Green.

For Law and Freedom!

Brown.

Why not, pray,
America—and with a cheer?

Green.

Hurrah—stand up!

Brown.

And let us hear
From some one with a wassail.

Gray.

Stay!

We have heard the toast to a people
Who inherit the English tongue;
By the men of the far horizons
Their praises have been sung—

Sung by the warder kinsmen
Who stand for a common cause,
When the vandal cannon thunder
Against the iron laws.

They talk of the King and the Kaiser
War-bent on the thin frontier;
Under the ocean passes
A rumor—is it fear?
While the great gray seas are chanting
Songs under the golden sun,
Shall prophets thrive who advertise
The end of the world begun?

O waste on the west no wassail!
On the east nor the south nor north!
For to-night, as the starry cohorts
Break ranks and sally forth,
Shine the lights of a beacon empire
On either side of the sea;
Drink—drink that the sun shall ever
Be shining on the free!

And peace to the cobwebbed cannon!
In peace, as brothers may,
While the ships of a whiter squadron
Ride on to a brighter day,
A health to the Unknown Father!
To the Universal Plan!
And the Law of a kindred children,
From the Straits to Hindostan!

AUTUMN



AUTUMN

Persons—The Same

All entering.

Brown.

Four months?

Gray.

To-day.

Brown.

And you are back
From overseas to recommend
The treadmill and the beaten track,
That lead to nothing in the end?

Where men, who want for daily bread,
Must follow as the phantom leads,
And wear, rebelliously, instead
Of coronals, a flow of beads?

Foregoing everything, to think
Of wandering across the sea,
With time enough to breathe, and drink
The nectar of such luxury!

Gray.

But—

Brown.

Though Content can house the sun
When Joy sits by the ingle-hearth,
There is no joy for any one
Denied the freedom of the earth.

And I am bonded as a slave,
Beyond the help of hollow words.

Green.

Indeed?

Brown.

Because I dared not brave
Dismissal and go where the birds,

Across the dreamy golden hours,
Through sunny afternoons took flight,
And, singing, wakened in the flowers
The pulses of a new delight.

Necessity has made me fear
The pinch of poverty and need,
And drudge and duel daily here,
With thoughts of other mouths to feed.

Touching the spirit of it all
Are still the hornets of distress,
As now and then I half recall
Some old forgotten happiness.

Gray.

I have a poem that may serve
To lift and take you out of town.

Green.

A poet—you?

Gray.

It does take nerve
To read one.

Green.

Then **you** read it, Brown.

Brown (*reading*).

WANDERLUST

*God, with a dawning gaze,
Kindles the sun,
Forging the iron days
One after one:*

*Shapes and designs the trees,
And now and then,
Fanning the furnaces,
Labors on men;*

*Smiting and hammering
This from an ape,
That from a stammering
Primeval shape;*

*Giving them each the vast
Reach of the sky,
Since the dark ages passed
Tardily by.*

*Showing the way to choose
Rest and reward
From the green revenues
Next to the sword;*

*Urging and beckoning
City and town
Forth for a reckoning
Now and anon*

*Over the open trail,
Clean from the din;
Sun—stars—a friendly hail,
And the wayside inn.*

Green.

Harken the heavy iron clang,
Such as the world was built upon!

Brown.

O for the times when Homer sang
The holy candor of the dawn!

Gray.

Why brood and browse on Once and Then,
When Here and Now are full of hope,
And women bravely tread with men
The upward and the downward slope?

Green.

Or whether in or whether out,
When Fortune happens down the way,
Be thankful for the call.

Gray.

And shout
With us who hail the coming day.

Brown.

A far cry!

Green.

No!

Gray.

Whom have you met
To introduce so much of gloom?
In happiness one must forget.

Brown.

My spring, that left, forgot to bloom.

And happiness, though erstwhile sweet,
Was but as poppies ere they swoon,
With faces shyly raised to meet
A fatal kiss—the kiss of noon.

For days grow long, and one grows tired
Of shaping ways and means to fit;
You may not know that I am hired—
The latest auctioneer of wit.

With all the harvest of a youth
Misspent, I now am left by art
With needless songs, to bear—forsooth!
The burden of a wasted heart.

If euthanasia were—

Green.

No, no!

We carry burdens of our own.

Gray.

As Jacob did when long ago,
His harder pillow was a stone.

The moral is as broad to-day
As it is long—and new and true
As is our greatly simple lay
That trumpets the Red, White and Blue.

I heard it in a London mart;
Berlin; St. Petersburg; amid
The Paris coil: and in the heart
Of Venice and of old Madrid,

I heard men marvel as they praised
The mighty Mother who, at last,
Had borne and mightily upraised
A people who could shame the past.

Green.

Begin again!

Brown.

An epic rôle,
When all around us is the din
Of armament.

Gray.

A mazer bowl,
And we are all immortal!

Brown.

In

The breath of war, it does suffice
To say that laureates—alack!
Are but as foolish little flies
Blown in a dusty window-crack.

So, out with cares and let us hear
How Green has found the countryside;
And how the golden fields appear,
With portaled harvests opened wide.

Green.

Occultly through a riven cloud,
The ancient river shines again,
Still wandering like a silver road
Among the cities in the plain.

On far horizons softly lean
The hills against the coming night;
And mantled with a russet green,
The orchards gather into sight.

Through apples hanging high and low,
In ruddy colors deeply spread
From core to rind, the sun melts slow,
With gold upcaught across the red.

And here and there, with sighs and calls,
Among the hills an echo rings
Remotely as the water falls
And down the meadow softly sings.

A wind goes by; the air is stirred
With secret whispers far and near;
Another token—just a word
Had made the rose's meaning clear.

I see the fields; I catch the scent
Of odors from the fresh split wood,
Where bearded moss and stains are blent
With autumn rains, and all is good.

An air arising turns and lifts
The fallen leaves where they had lain
Beneath the trees, then weakly shifts
And slowly settles back again.

While with far shouts, now homeward bound,
Across the fields the reapers go;
And, with the darkness closing round,
The lilies of the twilight blow.

Brown.

Cease, cease!

Gray.

Around us rings and roars
The rush of traffic.

Green.

Over trees,
On wood and orchard nature pours
A wave of autumn witcheries.

Brown.

Around us rolls the roar and rush
On every side, on every hand.

Green.

Beyond us dawns a crimson flush
Of glory on the autumn land.

Brown.

A captive spirit is but one
Imploring something beautiful.

Gray.

Lanier and Whitman saw the sun
As something other than the dull
Had yet imagined.

Brown.

Artists crave
The hidden soul in everything.

Green.

I hear the merle and mavis rave,
With mellow voices twittering
So sweetly!

Brown.

Art is but a mood
Deluding those who are but wise
Enough to crave a mental food
Mixed half with truth and half with lies.

Green.

With lies?

Gray.

No, no! Men meet and part
In droves and flocks: but it is fleece
Half clothes the world: and, as for art,
The city is a masterpiece.

Green.

And I oft think it is but meet
That beauty never grows so fair
But that men, searching in the street,
May find it there, may find it there.

So, fill again, and let us hear
Of England and her ancient halls:
In the gray empires bring us near
The age-old, warrior-guarded walls.

When victor over vanquished stood,
And men thought chivalry to be
A pilgrimage in manlihood,
Before the shrine of courtesy.

Gray.

So long ago they went their way
That but their shadows now remain,
Beyond such things as be to-day,
With chivalry upon the wane.

Europe is still across a blue,
Interminable barricade,
And gazes frowning on the new
Frontier and order we have made.

Yet, as when in that Minster aisle
Amid the tombs, at times I see
A stately vision slowly file
From the old realms of pageantry ;

When he, the lion-hearted king,
Was royally a troubadour,
And he, of fame still echoing,
Belied his youth at Azincour ;

Or when those simple warrior lords,
Within the Temple Garden gate,
Stood and on high, with fiery words,
Raised the red rose and wrecked a State.

But wars are only on the chart
As guiding periods for those
Who storm the head or rule the heart,
Above rash feuds of broiling foes.

And Shakespeare, as he lives to-day,
Is still the maestro who shall sing
Such songs as only singers may
When joy-bells of a nation ring.

Brown.

His iron crown permits him reign
A prince among the men of rhyme;
A man bid by the fates remain
Forever at the heart of time.

Gray.

With Bess and Henry?

Green.

Prince or peer.
His sway is over all romance,
From Rome to Arden Wood.

Gray.

I fear
No eulogies are left for France.

Nor for the Man of Destiny
Who, in his hour of triumph—lo!
With unawed will was soon to see
The ruined dream at Fontainebleau.

So let us only mourn the night,
Wherein the heavens once again,
With Europe watching, leap to light
Above the star—the star of Spain.

Green.

We will not mourn—we will not end,
While hope and love continue great.
The west is strong.

Brown.

The west will lend
Her strength to aid a crippled State.

Cuba, that staggers in the dark,
Hastens the dawn and bids us see
Clearly the way ahead and mark
The milestones of eternity.

Gray.

Then ho for this young land of ours!

Brown.

This child of nations brave to do!

Green.

Hurrah! we bring her native flowers.

Gray.

We bring her amaranth and rue.

WINTER



WINTER

Persons—The Same

Logs blazing in the hearth.

Gray.

A merry blaze brings in the year.

Green.

The world is blithe and warm
In many a home where none may hear
The slander of the storm.

Gray.

And comfortable cronies know
That right as well as wrong
Is swaying empires to and fro,
And driving them along.

Gray years and tears are but as one
Wan dew-drop in a cup,
Just brimming over ere the sun
Forever dries it up.

Despair and strength we have in kind,
The sunshine and the showers,
Wayfaring with this giant, blind,
Old staggering world of ours.

So come—bring in the ruddy ale
A-frothing, to be sure.
Desire and happiness prevail
That men may but endure.

Once more—a health!

Brown.

 Your mood is light
But light and lighter still
Must be the hearts of those to-night
Who would evade the chill.

For yonder crouching in his lair,
Now shrewdly shifting—hark!
How clean the claws of winter tear
The marrow of the dark!

Ah! comrades, do you know how wild
And piercing, incomplete,
Is silence when a little child
Begs vainly in the street?

I see the idle workman roam,
Starving and miserable,
Without a friend—presaging some
Wan acolyte of hell.

By many a hearth, in sore distress,
The mother, hollow-eyed,
Is hiding from a childish guess
Her deep, heart-broken pride.

I hear the Christian curse his birth,
And strong men crying out
Against the heavens and the earth,
In blasphemy and doubt.

I see despair traced on the wall
Where none knew what it meant,
In companies ignoring all
The smothered discontent.

Again they meet. Lo, lo—the tread
Of lawless bands! I see,
Upon a thousand faces spread,
The scowl of anarchy.

Green.

Enough—nor dwell on hapless things
So blighting to our cheer!
For low and loud the birch-log sings
A welcome to the year.

And while we watch the dancing elves,
Just turn another page,
And recollect that we ourselves
Live in a golden age.

O mark you how the flame-flowers soothe
The old year into glee,
With yon logs crooning low to smooth
Your frowns of anarchy!

Brown.

My anarch frowns?

Green.

Yes.

Brown.

Sure you know

They shadow darkened moods.
I know not why; but, ah! the glow
Of flame-flowers scents the woods!

Gray.

A nibble! Watch him! To insist
Upon a glowing scent,
Is marking you an anarchist,
Or else a decadent.

Brown.

The cavilers may safely cry
A hackneyed phrase at large
In literature—

Gray.

Perpol!

Brown.

And fly
No reasons with the charge.

Gray.

Proceed and tell us how you write
Between a hope and fear;
And how the learned critics slight
A modern sonneteer.

Brown.

The tale is less than many think
Who christen it divine,
With no emotions taught to drink
Remembrance as of wine.

My days are spent pursuing art,
With nature as a guide,
Amid the lilies of the heart,
Through fibres pushed aside.

Wherefore I cull me here a rose,
With lilies in between ;
And reap but where Another sows,
To sow where others glean.

While plucking blossoms now and then
For love alone, I know,
Alas! nor how nor even when
Another one will grow.

And so beneath the weight of time,
My heart, with making sure
Of caging songs within a rhyme,
Wists them evade the lure

Forevermore.

Green.

No more of moods!
But pipes and glasses bring!
For all about us now the woods
Are carpeted with spring.

Like fugitives from fairyland,
With dewy gems impearled,
The flowers begin to understand
And range the forest world.

I see the sleepy roses peer
Around the passing herds,
Awakening as if to hear
Some carol of the birds.

While back and forth the king-cups skip
About the blossom-queen;
All watching now the crocus trip
A measure down the green.

Brown.

Already drifting is the snow
On roof and square and street,
With muted echoes from the slow,
Sad tramp of weary feet.

They come and go who feel the stern
Necessities that prop
Their failing strength—and only learn
The hopelessness of hope.

Green.

Hark! midnight slowly tolls.

Gray.

Time leaps
The hurdled universe
Once over.

Brown.

While the city sleeps
Securely on its purse
Of luxury.

Green.

No more, for lo!
I only see the woods,
As down the year, beyond the snow,
A rosy orchard buds;

Wherein, by many a spreading tree,
Descending far away,
In clean forgetfulness I see
The little children play.

And vocalized the air now shakes
As, after waiting long
Beside her nest, the mother breaks
Into a world of song.

Till gathering from far and near,
The wondrous lyrics ring,
And daffodils arouse to hear
The leaping laugh of spring.

Already over tower and town,
With night and darkness gone,
Around the lily stars are blown
The roses of the dawn.

Gray.

Hurrah!

Green.

Aurora bravely pins
On high a starry page.

Gray.

Hurrah!

Brown.

The dawn?

Green.

Whereof begins
Another golden age.

Brown.

O sorry jest—and one that rings
With mockeries of art!

Gray.

It is no jest; for joy still sings
Deep in the common heart.

Brown.

I fear the songs know much distress.

Gray.

Above the darkest night,
The stars still shine.

Brown.

For happiness?

Gray.

Immortal souls shall light
On earth forever and for aye
With their *magnificat*,
While lad and lass together stray.

Green.

The heavens echo that :
For it is love makes life divine.

Gray.

A million systems move,
With crowding suns and moons that shine
Beneath the rule of love.

Brown.

The world begins to tire.

Gray.

The great
World, staggering and hurled .
From God, is master of its fate.

Green.

The world!

Brown.

Alas!

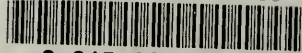
Gray.

The world!



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